

### Open Space Research

What would your neighborhood look like if vacant lots and abandoned buildings became green space? What percentage of parks does it have compared to other communities? Are there wetlands or wildlife areas that ought to be protected? For the first time, the comprehensive and detailed information needed to make these determinations is available to anyone with access to the Internet. [The New York City Open Space Information System Cooperative \(OASIS\)](#) has created an interactive mapping and analysis tool of New York City's open space resources. The site builds upon the new aerial photo-images of the five boroughs used in the basemap recently created by the city Department of Information Technology and Telecommunication, as well as detailed land use information on each tax parcel in New York City. It incorporates data from numerous city, state, and federal agencies, as well as community garden sites identified by the Council on the Environment for New York City.

The site, [www.oasisnyc.net](http://www.oasisnyc.net), allows users to create land use maps or aerial photo views by borough, neighborhood, community board or zip code, and to zoom into those maps to see details, such as vacant lots, more closely. Zoning and ownership information can also be obtained for each parcel. The site also provides land use statistics by community board or borough. Overlays show wetlands, as well as population density and income levels from the 1990 census. More informational layers are planned, including environmental problem sites and neighborhood tree data. There are inaccuracies, which is to be expected in a project this large using not always up-to-date information from government agencies, but users can help by providing corrections and updates through a feedback link.

OASIS was created through a collaborative effort of more than 30 government agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions and private companies, led by the U.S. Forest Service. The New York Public Interest Research Group's Community Mapping Assistance Project (CMAP) is the primary architect of the web site.

### Bloomingdale Woods: Wetlands or Not?

The effort by environmentalists on Staten Island to stop the construction of ball fields in eastern Bloomingdale Park received another setback. The environmental group, Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, believes the forested natural area has far more extensive wetlands than the state has

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by Anne Schwartz

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delineated. In March, however, the group's appeal of the state Department of Environmental Conservation's decision not to map the wetlands in the park was denied by Freshwater Wetlands Appeals Board. Protectors want to see ball fields located in other less environmentally sensitive areas, locations they also say would be a lot more practical and cost-effective than a forested, hilly park with scattered wet areas that was originally protected for its natural values. There is tremendous pressure from sports groups and local politicians to build the \$12 million recreation complex to provide much-needed playing fields for youth sports in south Staten Island. A final Environmental Impact Statement on the project is due to be released in mid-April. Protectors is conducting its own wetlands mapping workshops at the park this spring. For information, contact [SIProtectors@aol.com](mailto:SIProtectors@aol.com).

### Governors Island tours

Free walking tours of the former Coast Guard base in New York harbor are being offered this spring and summer. The tours include the island's two historic forts, which, along with 20 acres of surrounding land, were declared the country's newest national monument by President Clinton just before he left office. Last year, Mayor Giuliani and Governor Pataki agreed on a plan that would make the island a new public space, with educational facilities, a conference center, and parkland. But the federal General Services Administration is planning to sell the rest of island this year, unless legislation or negotiation by state to purchase the land is successful. The tours run on the following Wednesdays, from 10 a.m. - noon: May 2, July 11, August 1, and September 5. There will be a June 6 tour from 2-4 p.m. To register, email [petra@rpa.org](mailto:petra@rpa.org).

### Anne Sounds Off

In a recent Op-ed piece in the New York Times, Kenneth T. Jackson, professor of history at Columbia University, discusses what New York City needs to do to capitalize on the last decade's population increase, reflected in the 2000 census. He credits a sharp decline in crime as well as the excitement and crowds - "bustling sidewalks, outdoor restaurants and funky galleries" - with bringing young professionals back into the city. Yet, he says, "if New York....is to return to the glory of its past, then average men and women must choose to remain in the city after they have children." How to get them to do that? His solution is to improve the schools, which is obviously critical. But then what? Professor Jackson leaves out something that is essential to making the city more livable. What else do people seek when they move to the suburbs? A little bit of nature, lawns and shady streets for kids to play on, ball fields and pools and tennis courts. New York City lags behind most major cities in usable park acreage and recreational facilities per capita. To keep families in the city, we need to make an investment not only in the schools, but also in our parks and playing fields. We need to bring more green into the heart of the city.

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